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Good News for Men

Feminism is supposed to be good news for women; but does that mean it is automatically *bad* news for men? Many people assume that it is. What is given to women must necessarily be taken away from men. This is the old "slice of the pie" or "limited good" theory. There are only so many pieces in a pie and therefore a limited number of people may be served. And when people believe that theory, battle lines are drawn. In this case, if women are to get more of whatever share of the pie men have traditionally been given, men will lose something.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, however, is about unlimited good. It is true that it involves sacrifice, but paradoxically the sacrifice only brings about greater good. Those who lose their lives for the sake of the Gospel will find them. The seed analogy makes the same point. When a seed falls into the ground it dies, but fruit is the end result. Jesus taught that the servant attitude makes one great in the kingdom of God.

Then how could Christians have fallen for the old pagan idea that having authority and power all to themselves is the right

of men in human society? Or that having to share these things with women somehow diminishes their manhood?

The reason is that in a sinful world what is really unnatural according to the plan of God, has become natural. Gordon Houser attended the conference on "Men Working to End Men's Violence Against Women" in Colorado last winter. He writes that there he began to understand that the system which was as natural to him as walking, was in fact an oppressive system. As with so much that is considered "natural" in human nature, it takes a conversion experience to turn away from it and begin to live like a child of the kingdom of God.

In the kingdom of God, there is unlimited good, and mutuality between women and men expresses the true nature of humanity. So men are not losers when they take the egalitarian position. In fact, the opposite appears to be true. Men have much to gain by following the example of Jesus who emptied himself of divine power, took on himself a slave-like role, and allowed himself to be executed like a common criminal. But the example of Jesus does not end there. Because he gave up everything, God has "highly exalted him" (Phil. 2:9, Hebrews 12:2). No human, of course, can expect the same exaltation as Jesus Christ, but the principle of sacrifice yielding greater good is still true. And men who



For every woman tired of acting weak when she knows she is strong, there is a man weary of appearing strong when he feels vulnerable.

For every woman sick of acting dumb, there is a man burdened with the constant expectation of "knowing everything."

For every woman accused of being an emotional female, there is a man denied the right to weep.

For every woman feeling tied down by children, there is a man denied the full joy of sharing parenthood.

For every woman who takes a step toward her own liberation, there is a man who finds the way to freedom made a little easier.

—From *Anglican Encounter in Solidarity with Women*

follow the example of Jesus will never be diminished by emptying themselves of power over women.

In fact, men are diminished and oppressed when they accept the pagan view of male domination. Back to the seed analogy—if the seed does not die, it remains alone (John 12:24). Surely alienation and aloneness is the lot of those who rule over others. And surely the modern Western male, so well characterized in the writings of Woody Allen, is one of the most alienated and lonely creatures of all time. Because God created all human beings, male and female, as equal and responsible primarily to God, anyone who dominates another person is trying to take the place of God in that person's life. That burden of Godhood not only diminishes but deforms with terrible perversions those who try to assume it. The false god tries to assume the characteristics of God. He must be all-powerful (never fail at anything), all-knowing (make all the final decisions), and present at all times (involved in everything). No human can fill that order. And when men try to be God to women, they can only fail miserably. The perversions occur when they try to prove their false identity and cover the failure which they know in their hearts to be true. Only God can be God to any human being.

What biblical feminism has to offer a new little person coming into the world who happens to be male is much greater freedom to become all that he is meant by God to be. He will be free to give an authentic emotional response—to laugh or cry. He will be free to think creatively and intuitively, rather than only analytically. He will be free to develop deep personal relationships rather than pretend that people need him but he needs no one. He will not be alone in the dark that comes from the sinful human condition. Everyone needs someone who cares enough to tell them when they are about to stumble and fall, and everyone needs someone to rejoice with them when they succeed. Mutual submission and support in a marriage allows this give and take to serve its purpose.

It is one thing to preach that equality in male-female relationships is also good news for men; it is another to hear from people who have experienced its benefits. The writers in this issue are experienced in working toward equal relationships and have graciously agreed to share their stories. They come from different occupations and professions. These include a business person, teacher, missionary, pastor and doctor. I am grateful for their commitment to the egalitarian way of life and their honesty about the rewards as well as the difficulties of putting it into practice.

We hope that hearing these voices will be a step in the direction indicated by Anglican Bishop Edmond L. Browning when he said, "We must begin to work together, with one accord, to change the structures of alienation to structures of grace."

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by J. Denny Weaver

Two Parts of the Good News

I want to describe two ways that the women's movement has been good news—how it has given me a better world view.

I am grateful to have learned not to be anxious about women as leaders. I remember clearly the stereotypical attitudes prevalent during my high school and college days and beyond, when men assumed superiority over women in areas such as science and math (and were consequently surprised when women did well) and believed jokes about women drivers to be true. Whether registered via surprise or humor, these allegations about female inferiority also created concern—concern about the future of a student organization with a woman in charge, apprehension that a course taught by a woman would have less credibility than one taught by a man, malaise at riding in a car driven by a woman. The list could go on. Against that backdrop, to be able to abandon the stereotypes and affirm the competence and equality of women was a freeing experience.

Second, the women's movement has given me new insight into understanding conflicts. An important learning from the

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women's movement is that men tend to approach issues abstractly while women tend to start from the perspective of experience and feelings. In the process of that learning it has also become clear that these ways of understanding do not follow gender lines exclusively. Conflicts may develop when these two ways of knowing talk past each other. At one point, I would have considered the abstract approach to be clearly superior. I am glad that through the women's movement, I have learned to see that each way of processing a problem has its own validity, and expresses dimensions of a relationship neglected by the other. Considering a problem from either perspective exclusively would lead to some distortion.

While awareness of these ways of understanding does not eliminate conflicts, it does provide better insight into conflicts, and raises the respect level for those on both sides of a conflict by making each aware that one particular way of dealing with an issue is not inherently superior. On the discussion of whether these differences are innate or a product of socialization, I tend to go with the latter view. That opinion does not change the fact, however, that these differences are real and need to be recognized. In fact, we are all stronger in any situation for recognizing the contribution made by each way of understanding.

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by Mark Weidner

Mutuality

At a seminar some 20 years ago I believe, it was the evangelist John Perkins who said, "When a black man is down in a hole and a white man keeps him there with a foot on his neck, both are caught in the hole." I never had to write that modern day parable down, since the picture painted by Perkins was indelibly fixed in my mind. While the parable must continue to prod us to work toward better race relations it may also be applied to the relationships of men and women.... As long as men are holding women down, neither will be able to get up and live life as God fully intended for us.

Mutuality is a term that continues to unfold for me with new meaning in relationships with spouse, children, friends, wider family and colleagues. While the pursuit of mutuality doesn't end in perfection, we can be persistent and expect some payoffs for our intentionality. Webster defines mutuality as the state of being directed by each toward the other, sharing in common, and characterized by intimacy. We are created male and female in the image of God—created with the divine gift of being able to commune with one another and with God. When relationships are as they were intended to be, men and women can participate in a familial and intimate way with one another that is unique within God's grace and the redemptive work of Christ in the world.

Mutuality has benefits for both men and women. As women find freedom to accept new roles or pursue a vocation, men find a greater freedom and more options than they thought were available. Following are examples of some of the benefits I have come to appreciate are:

—A simple thing like sharing the driving has still eluded some couples I know. Why not share the driving with her and take the opportunity to smell the roses along the way? She probably has a better driving record and fewer violations anyway. I think some men do all the driving so when the kids get irritable they can say, "Settle those kids so I can drive!" when they would really be happier taking a break from the wheel and playing rummy 500 in the back seat.

—Parenting may be the area of our lives most desperately calling for greater mutual involvement. There are benefits for the fathers who pay the price, which is TIME. Joining

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children in their world can be a wonderful retreat and convey the message that they are welcome to share in your world when the time comes. Our children can be some of our best friends and teachers.

—Attending various meetings has been part of my life, since I work for the church conference. When I walk into a meeting room and it is all men I lament for the missing gifts that our sisters could bring. Sometimes I don't think of the absence of women until the meeting bogs down or goes nowhere fast and one wonders what some women around the circle might do for the productivity of the gathering. The work of the church moves closer to the kingdom as the gifts of all persons are acknowledged and received. Meetings can really become meetings.

—While Susan and I have our own specialties around the house (I fix broken appliances and she nurtures plants and decorates), we share a lot of other routine chores while we are both vocationally committed outside the home. Cleaning the bathroom or washing the kitchen floor can be shared by both husband and wife. The payoff is having more time together and enjoying a spirit of domestic justice.

—Several of us men here in town observed our wives coming home from their first Saturday monthly breakfast gathering with a sense of well being and joy from the friendship they experienced together. We finally started our second Saturday breakfast gathering a year or two ago and I have been thankful to the women who showed us the way ever since. We all meet together on occasion and it has been a good thing.

Mutuality is the way that God is calling us into relationship with each other. It is accepting the image of God created in each one of us. Jesus taught us not to lord over one another or to seek the power and privilege that tempts us to do that. While God is able to use kings and queens, politicians and soldiers, patriarchal and other social systems of the world in spite of themselves, our call as sons and daughters of the new creation in Christ is to discard the old wineskins that can no longer hold the new wine of the Gospel. Mutuality is the new song of how women and men can share in the abundant life together.

Mark Weidner has been conference minister of the Central District Conference since 1980. He and his wife Susan live in Bluffton, Ohio. They are parents of three daughters and one son—Lisa, Rebecca and Tim are adults and Elizabeth is in fifth grade.

"Of course, to be honest, we didn't sit down and negotiate who would do what — most changes came through frustrations and painful compromise."


by Rod Chamberlain

Working at the Frustrations

Over the past several years, roles in my marriage have shifted. When Anne began the move from homemaker to full-time counselor, our responsibilities also began to change. Of course, to be honest, we didn't sit down and negotiate who would do what—most changes came through frustrations and painful compromise.

One of the key reasons for this frustration, at least for me, is that there seem to be no ready role models, so I sometimes feel like this is happening just to me. But recently, as I have talked to other Christian men, I have found others are getting the feeling from Christian literature and Sunday morning exhortations that we men are to "help our spouse around the house more" and "work less" without any reduction of our current responsibilities (finances included). At the same time, I have noticed the decrease in traditional "fear" and/or "respect" for the father, while the promised increase in love and nurturing has been slow in coming.

So where is this good news?

Monday nights are one example. For the last three years our two sons (now 15 and 16) and I have had dinner together while Anne works. There is something special about this "boys night out" (we usually get pizza). It has become a great time to catch up on stories and adventures which seldom got shared when I was the "father" at the family table.

The change in our roles has now translated into more soccer games, wrestling matches, and theatrical productions, because I understand how important it is to them—it's not just an obligation for me to fulfill as their father. They also know me in many more honest ways as I have told stories of my triumphs and failures growing up.

Decision-making is another example. I do not feel like every decision has to be made by me, as it was before (and then I got the blame when things didn't work out perfectly). This includes Anne's disciplining the boys and her recent research and purchase of a car.

A final example is vulnerability. When things are especially difficult it has been helpful to share them with Anne. This does not decrease the pain, but it is comforting to know



someone else understands. In this way, I am also learning how to listen to her (without coming up with a "quick fix" solution).

I'm not sure Anne and I have an "equal" relationship. We're still working at the frustrations that emerge with shifting roles. I am hopeful that as we struggle through, our sons can avoid some of my difficulties. And maybe that's a pretty good gift from a father—who is also learning how to enjoy more of life.

Rod Chamberlain of Hershey, Pa., is a member of the Harrisburg Brethren in Christ Church. He is academic dean at Milton Hershey School, a school for children with financial needs. He and his wife Anne have been married for 19 years and have two sons, Seth and Dan.

by Elenore Marie Fast

Equal Family Members

God created male and female, inseparable, with the same purpose, sphere and function, equal in power and position and both in the image of God. The curse is a description of the result of sin, not God's prescription and should not be treated as a law. With the fall, the relationship between the man and woman was corrupted. However, Jesus' teachings about women and men show that it was His intention to reverse the consequences. In His life, death and resurrection, God's original intention becomes newly possible and transformed relationships between women and men become the new reality.

A marriage based on polarity keeps you poles apart. There is no quality that you can attribute to one sex that is not found in the other. And if a person understands his/her identity only in terms of various roles, he/she cannot manage intimacy. Thorough knowledge of one another only exists between persons who are equals. Unilateral, one-way authority is a barrier to closeness.

Friendship between the sexes based on mutual cooperation and appreciation means that a man gets an honest relationship with his spouse. We can reveal to each other not only our best sides, but show our weaknesses as well. There is a natural arrangement in a division of powers between the two, depending on individual capacities and suitabilities, and decisions need to be reached by mutual agreement. We can be free to make our own unique contribution and enjoy each other in a wholesome godly manner. A mutual reciprocity of giving and receiving that is satisfying to both partners seems to me to be the sustaining value of any relationship. We are equal family members under the Lordship of the true head of the Church who is Christ.

Elenore Marie Fast is currently living in Winnipeg, Man. She previously lived in Ann Arbor, Mich., and it was during her years on the administrative staff of the University of Michigan that she developed her interest in women's concerns. She and her husband Neil are now retired.

"At times I lead and she follows. And often she leads and I follow. The freedom of the dance is delightful."



by Louis Janzen

The Freedom of the Dance

Jean stopped college when we married and worked to support me in medical school in Chicago. But she continued night classes at the university. They were difficult and exciting years of shared growth. We found support in the Woodlawn Mennonite community where we lived with seminary and other graduate students. With internship, we moved from friends to isolation in the crowds of Los Angeles. Our first child was born four weeks after our move, far from family. . This was an introduction to what our lifestyle would include: 56 hours on duty, then two nights at home, with no days off—the worst of schedules to welcome a newborn. I slept through the first visiting hour and missed it.

How does a new family survive the stress? New job arrangements, certainly. I couldn't quit medicine, though it remains a love/hate profession. Jean was left alone with the children

and the house. There was no equal sharing of each other's responsibilities—not like Jean's parents in pastoring-teaching, or mine in farming. Later, starting practice, we chose to make our home in Fresno, Calif., in a community with Mennonites, in a church congregation that encouraged exploration and growth, a community with a new children's hospital which had been started by, and subsequently was supported by mothers of the area, and a new Mennonite college growing and developing. I quickly realized that solo pediatrics was impossible for me, and helped establish a group practice for children's medicine. We view these happenings as gifts from God.

Jean's first profession was caring for, teaching, and guiding our children. We remain pleased that she was able to do so at home. Her second profession began developing as the children grew into their school years, allowing her to finish her college work, and later, enter graduate school. The joy she has found in writing and teaching has been an ongoing pleasure for me also. She has taught me and opened new vistas, introduced me to beautiful people and places through her work. She continues to instill a sense of purpose in our children, encouraging them to expand their mission. Our oldest daughter, in OB-Gyne medicine, is now studying public health to develop skills for Third World medicine. Our younger daughter, a vocal performer, is now also studying architecture and design and working with her husband, a building supervisor. The men in our family are richly blessed by the women.

An image that we've enjoyed through the years, played with, and expanded for ourselves is borrowed from Robert Capon in his book *Bed and Board*, an image that compares the dance with the march. "The common notion of equality is based on the image of the march. In a parade, unequal beings are dressed alike, given guns of identical length, trained to hold them at the same angle, and ordered to keep step with a fixed beat. Nothing is less personal than a parade, nothing more so than a dance." At times I lead and she follows. And often she leads and I follow. The freedom of the dance is delightful.

As I look back, especially in my work, I have spent too much time marching, trying to be good enough, or better. Even in my search for Zion, I might have marched less, and danced a bit more.

Louis Janzen is a pediatrician from Fresno, Calif. He is husband of Jean Janzen, a poet and teacher, and they are members of College Community Mennonite Brethren Church in Clovis, Calif. Louis has been in medical practice for 30 years and is a co-founder of Fresno Children's Medical Group.

"As I began to work alongside women chaplains, teachers and pastors, I saw in their work a quality of caretaking that went far beyond my ability to care."



by Marlin E. Thomas

The Gifts of Male-Female Friendships

I was well into mid-life before I overcame the fear of my sexuality. That fear prohibited me from enjoying quality non-sexual relationships with women. When I finally overcame that fear, several wonderful gifts of life came to me.

One was the ability to share my own intense sensitivity to the human factor of life with others. The men I knew did not understand that sensitivity as I did. My wife had her own sense of it, but that one relationship kept me somewhat limited in interacting with others.

Another gift was the depth of meaning which many women bring to conversation. As my female friendships increased in number and in depth of meaning, my own understanding of life deepened. It brought a wonderful sense of identity with the human soul that had been lacking earlier.

A third gift was that of doubling my sources for the interpretation of the meanings of life. Relationships with men only, effectively withheld from me the insights that women could

provide. Now I am able to gather the insights of both men and women, and enlarge the picture.

A fourth gift was helping me understand a more appropriate approach to the role of caretaking. I had always been quite matter of fact, though my courtesy to others masked my true inability to comprehend more deeply the human factor in caring. As I began to work alongside women chaplains, teachers and pastors, I saw in their work a quality of caretaking that went far beyond my ability to care.

Finally, I came to experience release from my sense of sexual bondage. I had been so tight, fearing that I might fall, that I couldn't really be comfortable in mixed company. As I moved closer to women I learned more about my own feelings, and in learning I discovered the difference between pure sexual feelings and lust. I discovered that feeling "male" was not sinful, and that in so doing lust was not a necessary concomitant. Thus I was liberated to enjoy more fully, yet more appropriately, the relationships God sent my way.

Marlin Thomas has been a Mennonite Brethren pastor and Christian school teacher for 30 years. He has been in the conflict consultation business on the side for five years, and recently opened an office in Colorado Springs, Col., to do full-time mediation, intervention, and consultation in conflict resolution for churches, families, and businesses. He is married and has two grown children. He recently moved to Colorado Springs from Ulysses, Kan.

"Little did I realize that God was the one who was allowing us to grow into the kind of partnership that would allow the 'head of the household' to ask for directions."

by Victor D. Dorado

Walking Side by Side

It has been called alternately an "existential crisis," the "dark night of the soul," "mid life crisis," and the "mid life crazies." Whatever it is, it is a time of searching—a time when a person questions some of the basic ideas, beliefs and "doctrines" that he/she has come to accept. For me, this time included its share of moral, intellectual and spiritual "gymnastics"—in short, sin. I came to trust my life partner, Velia, with all of the craziness I was feeling.

Months earlier, I earnestly asked God to guide me to someone who could understand and empathize with my situation, thinking all along it would be another man. Much to my surprise (although in retrospect God's answer was obvious), God showed me that my dearest friend and confidant was only an embrace away. Velia and I talked for hours. We took time off work to cry, laugh and pray. Little did I realize that God was the one who was allowing us to grow into the kind of partnership that would allow the "head of the household" to ask for directions. We have come to believe that we are *one* and not spiritually "separate, but equal." It seemed to us that all the "machismo" stuff that is so dominant in our culture only left us lonely. She was expected to follow and I was supposed to lead. But the "leader" got lost, only to be rescued by the only true Leader who is God.

If Velia and I had not been trying to practice the kind of partnership that true spiritual equality affords, I am convinced I would have missed God's special messenger—who happens to be my wife. In scripture we read, "can two walk together unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3) "Agreed," to me, means walking side by side as well as with the same gait, so that, over time, the two remain side by side. That way if one begins to go off course, the other can remind him/her of the path they agreed to travel. If I would have been "walking" ahead of Velia, I could have led us both off course, because she may not have been involved in the decision regarding "the road to travel." If I would have been walking behind her she would not have noticed me turn. We are realizing more and more that we are only fellow (equal) journeyers, anyway. God knows the way and He *alone* has successfully navigated this "road" without help.

Victor is a businessman and his wife Velia a teacher in Alhambra, Calif. They are long-time members of City Terrace Bible Church (Mennonite Brethren).



by Paul Shaheen

The Loss of the Feminine in Church Leadership

When I first became a Christian in 1971, I was part of a college-age revival that followed on the heels of an evangelistic crusade at Kent State University. I spent the summer with a group of about 20 people, and we grew in our faith together.

The group had no official leaders, but two people emerged prominently. One was Chuck, who later became pastor of a large church in the area. The other mentor was a woman named Kathy. Kathy ministered to our group in prayer, in scripture teaching, and in emotional healing (which had not at that time become a subcategory of religious literature.)

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In the two years that followed that first summer, I worked with Campus Crusade for Christ (a campus evangelical student movement) at a large urban university. One of the crusade staff members, Evie, was very discerning of the personal needs of many students, and always had a creative, loving talent for bringing women to faith in Jesus Christ. She advised me at the time that I needed to learn to love myself, to see how God loved me, something I am hearing again now from counselors after 20 years of struggle.

Many of the men with whom I searched the scriptures are now pastors, priests and ministers. To my knowledge, none of the women are. Yet the women I have just described had something unique and beautiful to offer. As a result of my experiences with Kathy and Evie, I continue to miss a feminine presence in church leadership. I wonder if I would be more in touch with my emotions, more socially confident (and less lonely) if Kathy or Evie had had the same opportunities that Chuck had. Would I be gnashing my teeth when my critical-thinking acquaintances criticize the church's sexism and lack of emotional balance?

The saddest thing now is what used to be the happiest thing: I am not alone. I know a lot of Christian men like myself, who have suffered from one-dimensional Christian leadership. When God made us, it was a two-dimensional creation, male and female. If out of Adam, God made Eve, I find it hard to believe that the substance of Eve, taken from Adam, could be inferior for ministry, which ultimately *must* involve the *whole* church. I miss Kathy and Evie, it's true, but I miss also the many like them who will never have access to the means to prove that they are competent to counsel and teach. And how much poorer will we all be because of that?

Paul Shaheen is a postal clerk, journalist and song writer who attends Lakeview Mennonite Church in Chicago, Ill. He recently published a book of children's songs, and is now finishing a book of reflections on the current religious climate. He lives alone, owns no car, and has no pets.

by Tim Bergdahl

Egalitarian Marriage

What benefits can a husband receive in an egalitarian marriage? Before noting some of the benefits I receive, I'll mention two things. One is that my wife and I persist in the conviction that our relationship should be egalitarian. The second is that we do not really have an egalitarian marriage (my wife is quicker to point this out than I). If there is a place where one can say, "This is our egalitarian marriage," we're not there. At best we are on the road toward that place, are convinced that our years together will be spent on this road, and see the journey as a worthy and exciting one.

One of the benefits I receive "on the road" is satisfaction and confidence that I am doing the right thing. I am confident of God's blessing. I am confident of our relationship's biblical foundation and guidance. I am proud of how we are living our lives. These are, of course, my own feelings and perceptions, but they contribute in no small way to my well-being.

I consider it a benefit that we each have the same footing in our relationship. We do not stand higher or lower in comparison to each other. We stand beside each other. I did not marry someone who would "disappear" into me through marriage. My wife assists me without being my assistant. I've met many women whose individuality is lost to the overwhelming identity and purpose of the husband. One woman told me flatly (and with pride), "I get my identity from my husband." Neither of us is merely a shadow or reflection of the other, nor are we just two individuals. Every day we try to work out together the mystery of two becoming one flesh. We're convinced it can be done without one paying the price for both. When there's a price to be paid, we have a joint account.

I benefit from being able to devote my attention to a role as a disciple of Jesus Christ, rather than assuming the role of feudal lord of "my" home. We expect our roles will continuously evolve out of commitment to discipleship and to each other. I like getting to know my wife as a person and as a disciple. That perspective of each other provides the framework for how we relate to each other when we are acting as house cleaner, cook, mechanic or accountant.

I benefit in actively participating in a number of activities essential for good living. I am not excluded from non-traditional, though certainly essential, responsibilities such as

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cooking, house cleaning, and clothes washing. I am also not solely burdened with responsibility for car maintenance, plumbing, or even security. Those things which are important to our lives are important to both of us.

I benefit from a lack of unhelpful assumptions about strength and weakness. I am not "the strong one," neither is my wife "the weak one." Where I am not strong, she often is, and vice versa. Where we both lack strength, we bear the burden of weakness together. We rely on each other, and not just physically. Neither of us expects the other to always make right decisions. We think that conspiring together offers the best opportunity for us to make decisions that, even if not correct, we both can live with.

Some of the benefits of our relationship will, we pray, be deferred for some time. If my wife predeceases me, I will be able to wash my own clothes, cook my own meals, and keep up with my own housecleaning. We all know men who cannot do these things. One of our widowed relatives wept when faced with the reality of washing his own clothes for the first time. He didn't know how to operate his washing machine. Another relative didn't know where her deceased husband kept all their financial records. I benefit from the comforting thought that, if I die first, my wife's burden will be from grief of separation, and not from any loss of protection, provision, or purpose.

The benefits of egalitarian marriage are worth considering. I see our egalitarian marriage as the best possible means to fulfill myself as a person, my wife as a person, and us as a couple. To adapt a famous slogan, we get to "be all we can be" (marriage has it over the army in that there's no necessity to kill anybody).

Tim Bergdahl and his wife Janine are doing graduate studies at Karachi University in Pakistan. They are from Clovis, Calif., and members of the Mennonite Brethren church.



"The most important requirements for national progress, Todd found, are equality and mutual respect between the sexes in marriage and women's literacy..."

by Paul G. Hiebert

Good News for a Country

Equality and mutual submission between men and women is God's ideal for humanity. But, some ask, do these work in a world ruled by power-hungry leaders, inequality and hierarchy? Do we not need strong leadership for a nation to prosper?

Emmanuel Todd, a Dutch social demographer, studied more than 70 countries around the world. He found that the relationship between the sexes in marriage is the most important factor in national advancement (*The Causes of Progress* 1986). Economists argue that savings, productivity and land distribution are needed for progress. Political scientists call for democratic governments. None of these, Todd concludes, have been the causes of development in the world in the last 200 years. Rather, they are byproducts of development.

The most important requirements for national progress, Todd found, are equality and mutual respect between the sexes in marriage, and women's literacy (development has only a low correlation with men's literacy). The reason for this, he argues, is that children learn their views of personhood primarily from their mother. When they see their mother treated with dignity and acting as an autonomous person, they gain a high view of themselves as persons.

But what is good for the country is also good for the family. When men take absolute authority, they and their wives are incomplete persons. The husband cannot express the child within him, nor can the wife be an adult. The result is not a marriage, but two half-persons living in a codependent relationship. When husbands and wives relate to each other as equals, and help each other to develop their full capabilities as autonomous beings, we have a true covenant relationship between two whole persons.

Paul G. Hiebert is a professor of missiology and chair of the department of Missions and Evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Illinois. He and his wife Frances have been missionaries in India and together have become deeply involved in issues dealing with a Christian theology of the relationship between women and men.

Letters

An open letter to Missionary Kid Survivors:

Recently adult missionary kids (AMKs) from various missions around the world have been finding each other and lending support in healing from assaults overseas.

We have discovered that boarding schools and isolated mission stations offered perfect settings for all kinds of abuse, including sexual, physical, spiritual, and emotional. Moreover, there is no legal recourse for children assaulted by expatriots overseas. There is even less acknowledgements of assaults by host country nationals.

You are not alone if you were peeped on, hunted in the night, objectified and ridiculed, beaten, or subjected to manipulative prayers by mission personnel (such as dorm parents or doctors). You are not alone if you were fondled, raped and sodomized as part of your bedtime ritual. You are not alone if you were mutilated (subjected to clitoridectomies), forced into bestiality or intimidated by animal killings.

If you tried to cry out but your letters home were censored, if the mission expected your parents to take sides against you, if you learned to put mission authority ahead of your own intuition, you need healing. If you took a suit to your mission and were belittled, if you abuser was subsequently promoted or sent back to the field, you have peers still reeling from revictimization.

If you feel doubly rejected, your will crushed, your anger suppressed, reach out for help before your coping, high-risk behaviors destroy you. You may feel like a heretic or trouble maker. Knowledge that God is on your side and wants your healing can be particularly hard-won for wounded missionary kids.

To support and encourage you on your painful road to restoration, we are planning a newsletter, "Missionary Kids in Recovery." It will include testimonials, book reviews, articles by MK counselors, and expressive prose and poetry. We realize that it is hard to maximize the positives of your childhood abroad if you were victimized in that setting.

To subscribe or submit material, call or write: FAITH EIDSE KUHNS, 2380 Ryan Pl., Tallahassee, FL 32308, Ph: 904-668-8019; or, SHARON KOON, P.O. Box 531, Reynoldsburg, OH 43068, Ph: 614-861-8512.

—Faith Eidse Kuhns, Tallahassee, Fla.

Book Review:

When Children are Abused

Facing the Brokenness: Meditations for Parents of Sexually Abused Children, by K.C. Ridings (Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pa., 1991, 196 pages)

This book was written as a result of a mother's struggle when she discovered two of her children were sexually abused. K.C. Ridings initially faced this issue at a time when the church was not willing to admit sexual abuse was and is happening within its institution.

The book is a 31-day meditation guide for parents of sexually abused children. It is broken down into sections that first define the pain and then suggest processes for healing for both the parent and the child. Lastly, Ridings addresses the very important issue of the Christian response to child sexual abuse.

In each meditation the author uses symbolism to help the reader connect with his/her feelings. She encourages the reader to develop a prayer corner in which the suggested symbols can be placed. One example of the symbols used is in the section about the hurting child. The meditation is entitled "Death of Innocence" and the symbol for the prayer corner is a bandage made out of torn white cloth. Ridings states, "The symbols are planned specifically for those times you are too overwhelmed to pray and believe." Ending each meditation is what Ridings calls the workbook page. This includes questions, letters, prayers, poems, and more. Both the symbols and the workbook page provide a significant format giving the reader permission to face the many deep seated emotions that are characteristic of people dealing with the trauma of sexual abuse.

Ridings speaks directly to the problem many victims face in the church both theologically and in the attitudes of other Christians. As more and more stories surface concerning sexual abuse, many people within the church continue to put the responsibility of forgiveness and reconciliation on the victims. In light of this Ridings does an excellent job portraying the incredible pain of the healing journey. She presents theology in such a way that it does not further victimize the victims. Theology which states that the victims or their parents need to "forgive and forget" is not helpful. Hearing

this message can both stifle the healing process of the victim and take away the perpetrator's responsibility for his/her actions. Using the Bible as a guide, Ridings does a good job of educating and bringing awareness to the church of its responsibility to address the issue of sexual abuse as well as be prepared to provide support for both the victim and the perpetrator.

Facing the Brokenness is an excellent resource for persons relating closely to a victim of sexual abuse such as the parent, grandparent, Sunday School teacher or church leader. I believe it can also provide ongoing healing for an adult survivor. Perpetrators who are genuinely repentant and working on understanding the issues of child sexual abuse could also benefit from the book.

The book, however, is particularly helpful for parents. The parent whose child has been sexually abused experiences a vast array of emotions such as guilt, anger, sadness, pain, horror, and helplessness. *Facing the Brokenness* attempts to normalize the parents' process and provide comfort in the midst of pain. It also offers helpful tools in assisting the child through the healing process.

I feel this book is a very necessary and useful guide whether used in a private setting or in a supportive group setting. It could be used for discussion and awareness building in Sunday School classes and small groups. It would also be an excellent resource in a support setting for parents and caretakers of sexual abuse victims. It is a book that churches need to have in their libraries and pastors need to have on their shelves.

I personally want to thank K.C. Ridings for her much-needed contribution to the church concerning the very painful realities of those among us dealing with the trauma of sexual abuse.

Reviewed by Dawn Bontrager Lehman, Goshen, Ind.



Book Review:

Two Views of Women in Pastoral Ministry

Your Daughters Shall Prophecy: Women in Ministry in the Church, edited by John E. Toews, Valerie Rempel and Katie Funk Wiebe (Kindred Press, Winnipeg, Man., 1992, 234 pages).

Your Daughters Shall Prophecy was mandated by the Board of Reference and Counsel of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. The intent of this book is to stimulate Bible study and discussion about the role of women in church ministry. John E. Toews suggests that at the present time pain and searching characterize the discussion of women's roles in the church. Women's pain of rejection and exclusion from ministry urges the church to reexamine its biblical interpretations.

Bible study is the primary approach of this book. Nine chapters focus on biblical themes or texts. The creation stories, the Gospels and Pauline texts are examined regarding the relationship between women and men, and two divergent interpretations emerge. The first suggests a permanent and normative creation order that establishes the headship of men over women and gives men the lead responsibility in church ministries; thus women must exercise their ministry gifts under male leadership. The second interpretation affirms the equality and complementarity of women and men and the full gifting of women for church ministry. Both interpretations agree that men and women are equal as persons in creation and redemption, and that women are, in fact, gifted for ministry.

The book outlines that Mennonite Brethren believe that the Bible is the sole and ultimate authority for questions of belief and practice. What then are we to do with the differing biblical interpretations around the role of women in ministry? And to complicate matters further, what are we to do with historical records (two chapters provide surveys of women in church history) which suggest that during periods of spiritual renewal and mission movements, a "revival-based equality" allowed and even encouraged women to practice their gifts of ministry? Valerie Rempel and John E. Toews move the discussion along by recognizing that both the biblical texts and the interpreters reflect diversity. The biblical texts are

written at different times to address different issues in different communities. Every interpreter also brings gender, race, class, nationality, religious experience, marital status and experience, power status, and other historical and cultural realities to their reading of the biblical text. This diversity is good. It also makes me wonder how this book would read if more women were doing the Greek and Hebrew exegesis, or if lay people with factory or food service jobs were the authors.

The discussion about the role of women in ministry is an important one. It reflects not only our differing ways of reading the Bible, but also contemporary fears and anxieties about changing role identities, about sexuality, and about power.

Your Daughters Shall Prophecy is meant to start (or continue) discussion in churches. It has a helpful format for a Sunday School class or a small study group, with suggestions for additional reading and discussion questions for each chapter. Hopefully this book can help us to move beyond the question of whether women can exercise their gifts of ministry, and we can rather ponder what shape our churches will take when women and men are freed to proclaim the gospel message.

Reviewed by Eileen Klassen Hamm, Saskatoon, Sask.

News and Verbs

- MCC Women's Concerns is exploring the idea of compiling an educational packet on **ministering to the family members** of survivors and perpetrators of abuse. If you have resources or stories that would help the church minister to families where abuse issues are being processed, you are invited to contact the *Women's Concerns Report* editor.
- A Women's Conference on Developing **Just and Sustainable Rural Communities** will be January 22-24 in St. Louis, Mo. For information contact NAFA (North American Farm Alliance) Women's Project, Box 747, Coloma, MI 49038; 616-468-8440.
- Goshen College seeks **theater generalist** for one-year sabbatical replacement in 1993-94. Goshen College also seeks assistant director for the new Bachelor of Science in **Nursing** completion program. For information contact John Eby, Academic Dean, Goshen College, Goshen, IN 46526.
- Rachel K. Pannabecker is serving as interim director of **Kauffman Museum**, North Newton, Kan.
- **Debra Fieguth of Winnipeg is new associate editor of Christian Week**, the biweekly Canadian evangelical newspaper.
- *Starting Over* by Joyce J. Tyra (Herald Press, 1992) tells stories of women whose **marriages have been broken** by divorce or death and describes possibilities for hope and recovery.
- Esther Loewen, member of Hillsboro (Kan.) M.B. Church, received the **J. Donald Coffin Memorial Book Award** during the annual convention of the Kansas Author's Club in October. The award recognized her recently released novel, *The Enchanted Prairie*.
- Brenda Wall, member of Reedley (Calif.) M.B. Church, has released a **contemporary Christian vocal album** titled "In Ceaseless Praise." The title song was written by two other Mennonite Brethren women from Reedley, Ann Hudson and Martha Willems. For information on the tapes contact Reedley M.B. Church.
- **Peace Theology and Violence Against Women**, edited by Elizabeth G. Yoder (Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1991, \$10), contains papers and responses from the October 1991 Consultation on Peace Theology and Violence Against Women held at AMBS. Order from Institute for Mennonite Studies, 3003 Benham Ave., Elkhart, IN 46517-1999.



Women in Ministry

• *Ardith Frey* was commissioned September 27 as pastoral care giver at Aberdeen EMC Church in Winnipeg.

• *Marjorie Ediger*, pastor at First Mennonite Church in Ramsom, Kans., was ordained September 20.

• *Doris Rempel* is new chaplain at Menno Hospital, Clearbrook, B.C.

• *Sylvia and Wallace Jantz* were installed October 11 as pastors at Souderton (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

• *Lois A. and Wilmer J. Hartman* were installed on the pastoral team at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio, on Sept. 27.

• *Edith Shenk* was ordained September 20. She is serving on the pastoral team at Weavers Mennonite Church in Virginia with her husband Joseph.

• *Miriam Book* was ordained to leadership ministry at Belmont Mennonite Church in Elkhart., Ind. Book serves as associate general secretary of the Mennonite Church General Board.

Your Contribution Makes a Difference!

Women's Concerns Report is available to anyone, whether or not they are able to pay. We appeal to those who can, to pay \$10 a year toward our editing, printing and mailing costs.

Please take the time to mail in a contribution! All of your contributions together will help keep MCC Women's Concerns strong and enable us to continue printing *Report* six times yearly.

We recommend \$10 yearly (\$5 for students and those on limited income). Any amount given above \$10 is tax deductible. Please return this response form with your check made out to Mennonite Central Committee.

Your name _____

Address _____

Enclosed find a \$_____ contribution for *Women's Concerns Report*. Send to:
MCC Women's Concerns, Box 500, Akron, PA 17501; or MCC Women's Concerns, 50 Kent Ave., Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1.



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Join the Celebration!
20 Years of MCC Women's
Concerns

1993 is the 20th anniversary of the formation of the MCC Committee on Women's Concerns and of *Women's Concerns Report*.

To celebrate, we are inviting Mennonite and Brethren in Christ women from across Canada and the United States (and around the world, as far as our readership extends!) to plan local celebrations. Our goal is to have at least 20 local celebrations during September 1993, which may be as large or small, formal or informal, as planners choose.

We have compiled a list of 20+ suggestions for activities you can plan in your community. If you would like to explore planning one of the 20th anniversary celebrations, please call or write MCC Women's Concerns for our "20th Anniversary Celebration" planning flier. **We hope to hear from you!**

WOMEN'S CONCERNS REPORT is published bimonthly by the MCC Committee on Women's Concerns. The committee, formed in 1973, believes that Jesus Christ teaches equality of all persons. By sharing information and ideas, the committee strives to promote new relationships and corresponding supporting structures in which men and women can grow toward wholeness and mutuality. Articles and views presented in REPORT do not necessarily reflect official positions of the Committee on Women's Concerns.

WOMEN'S CONCERNS REPORT is edited by Kristina Mast Burnett. Layout by Janice Wiebe Ollenburger. Correspondence and address changes should be sent to Kristina Mast Burnett, Women's Concerns, MCC, P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501-0500.

U.S. residents may send subscriptions to the above address. Canadian residents may send subscriptions to MCC Canada, 50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1. A donation of \$10 per year per subscription is suggested.

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